



CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EASTERN
EUROPEAN CHURCHES

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Introduction

Next year "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" will appear six times a year, instead of four times, as hitherto. The new issue will begin with No. 13 (No. 1, 1962).

In view of the importance of the questions with which it has dealt, and the interest which they have aroused, it seems more convenient to publish it at more frequent intervals, and to make each number somewhat shorter. This will enable us to inform our readers more quickly of what is going on.

"Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" will continue to describe the forces which affect the life of the churches in the countries of Eastern Europe.

The present issue is as usual divided into two parts: "religious news" of general ecumenical interest and "anti-religious news" which clearly show that atheist propaganda is certainly not decreasing.

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C H U R C H N E W S : U.S.S.R.

The Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches

Extract from a report by Archbishop Nikodim of Jaroslav and Rostow
(President of the Foreign Department of the Church of the
Moscow Patriarchate)

"The question before us is the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches.

"We realise the importance of this question for the Russian Orthodox Church, for the other churches (both Orthodox and of other confessions) and also for the World Council of Churches itself.

"The following have been characteristic of the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches since 1945 up to the present time and which have helped to develop an atmosphere of friendly cooperation between us, which ultimately led to the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on the 30th March this year to apply for membership of the World Council of Churches.

"But before we examine this question, Archbishop Nikodim continues, I should like to mention the problem of the basic attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church to the other Christian churches.

"The Russian Orthodox Church is free from any spirit of proselytism, nor is it indifferent towards its brethren in the other Christian confessions. It has never completely excluded itself from other churches, but has always shown great sympathy for the efforts made by other churches to restore the universality of the One Church... so that the prayer of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be fulfilled.

"The efforts of the Russian Church in this direction have justified themselves historically through the efforts of other Christian churches, and through the deep longing of its members for true universality.

"In this connection it is sufficient to recall the friendly fraternal relations between the Russian Church and the Anglican Church in the 18th and 19th centuries, and our relations with the Old Catholic and Episcopal churches in the 19th century.

"The friendly attitude of the Russian Church to the churches of other confessions found expression in the two famous letters sent by the Holy Synod of the Russian Church in February 1903 and March 1905 to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Joachim III, containing a profound analysis of the relations of the Russian Church to the other Christian confessions.

"During the first stage of the ecumenical movement at the beginning of the 20th century the Russian Church maintained a sympathetic attitude towards the formation of the 'Joint Commissions' in which the non-Orthodox churches cooperated, in preparation for the World Conference on Faith and Order.

"The Russian church press at that time published articles welcoming the efforts of the other Christian churches to express their efforts for unity in an organisational form.

"In January 1945, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (then 'in process of formation') got in touch with the Moscow Patriarchate through Metropolitan Eulogios (the Exarch in Western Europe), sent him information about the ecumenical movement and suggested that contacts be effected between the leaders of the ecumenical movement and the Russian Orthodox Church.

"The churches within the ecumenical movement were also interested in persuading the Russian Orthodox Church to cooperate in the World Council of Churches, and thus to strengthen the ecumenical movement. This interest was shown by the efforts of the well-known pioneer for ecumenism, George Bell, Bishop of Chichester.

"In April 1946 the presidents of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches, Pastor Marc Boegner, Geoffrey Fisher (former Archbishop of Canterbury), Archbishop Germanos of Thyateira, Dr. John R. Mott, and its General Secretary, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft sent a proposal to His Holiness the Patriarch Alexius, that closer contacts be established between the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church.

"The correspondence which ensued between the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, and the exchange of literature and other forms of contact, led to a deeper study of the ecumenical movement by active leaders of the Russian Church.

"In 1947 consultations began between the Orthodox churches, including the Russian Church, in order to work out their united attitude to the ecumenical movement.

"In February 1948 the leaders of the ecumenical movement sent an invitation to the Russian Orthodox Church, inviting it to attend the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam (August/September 1948).

"The Russian Orthodox Church and some of the other Orthodox churches together expressed their attitude to the ecumenical movement and to the work of the World Council of Churches.

"In July 1948 in Moscow the historic gathering was held between the heads and representatives of the Orthodox churches in the different countries. One of the questions which they considered was 'The Ecumenical Movement and the Orthodox Church'.

"In the resolution passed on this question mention was made of the extremely Protestant orientation of the work of the World Council of Churches and of its political tendencies, and for these reasons the Orthodox churches attending the Moscow Conference decided not to attend the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam.

"This resolution did not mean, of course, that relations ceased altogether between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, or that the Russian Church took no interest in the ecumenical movement....

"That was impossible!

"For the functions of the World Council of Churches, as laid down in its Constitution, corresponded to the general views of the Russian Orthodox Church. The question was, how these functions were to be carried out, and what was to be the general purpose of the work of the World Council of Churches.

"The Russian Orthodox Church hoped that the sincere criticisms made by itself and by other Orthodox churches of certain aspects of the work of the World Council of Churches would help the latter to adopt a position more acceptable to the Orthodox churches.

"In this our church was not mistaken.

"After the official formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, the Russian Orthodox Church began carefully to study the work of all the Departments and Commissions of the World Council of Churches, especially the Department of Faith and Order.

"The leaders of the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church continued to correspond and to exchange literature. And gradually, through these mutual contacts, the general policy of the World Council of Churches became more and more clear.

"The Russian Church appreciated the report entitled 'The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches' (worked out by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in 1950) in which the problem of the interconfessional nature of the World Council of Churches is duly explained.

"During 1954 and 1955 some correspondence was exchanged between the heads of the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church concerning the decisions taken at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches held at Evanston in August, 1954.

"In February 1955 the Moscow Patriarchate sent the World Council of Churches^a careful analysis of the documents of the Evanston Assembly, stating which decisions the Russian Church considered to be a mistake, and which ones it considered conducive to inter-church union.

"The Russian Church warmly supported the appeal made by the Assembly to prohibit weapons of mass destruction and to reduce armaments.

"The reply sent by the heads of the World Council of Churches to Patriarch Alexius in August 1955 contained explanations of certain aspects of the ecumenical movement.

"Furthermore the letter sent in December 1955 by the Holy Synod of the Russian Church to the heads of the World Council of Churches confirmed the possibility of an acceptable basis for the further development of the relations between the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church.

"In March 1956, Dr. Franklin Fry, Chairman of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches visited the Russian Orthodox Church as a delegate from the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. In the conversations between Dr. Fry and the heads of the Russian Orthodox Church some important questions were discussed relating to the relations between the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church.

"As the outcome of the preparatory conversations between the leaders of the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church, the first official meeting between representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and representatives of the World Council of Churches took place in August 1958 at Utrecht (Holland).

"During the course of this meeting - at which the atmosphere was very friendly, as at all the subsequent meetings - the essential questions concerning the relations between the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church were considered, and agreements were reached on a number of practical ways of strengthening these mutual relations.

"The report on this encounter led the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, at its meeting on the 8th December 1958, to approve concrete ways of extending the mutual relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches. It accepted the invitation of the World Council of Churches to send observers from the Russian Church to the annual meetings of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. And it invited the World Council of Churches to send a delegation, headed by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft (its General Secretary) to visit the Russian Orthodox Church.

"Two members of the staff of the Foreign Department of the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate were sent to Geneva in June/July 1959, in order to acquaint themselves on the spot with the work of the General Secretariat of the World Council of Churches and its various divisions and departments.

"In August 1959 the Russian Orthodox Church sent two observers to the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Rhodes.

"In December 1959, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, paid a visit to the Russian Orthodox Church as head of a delegation from the World Council of Churches. During their stay in the USSR the delegates got to know something about the life of the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christian churches and religious groups in the USSR.

"His Holiness the Patriarch Alexius received Dr. Visser 't Hooft and the whole delegation.

"In July 1960 the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches organised the Ecumenical Conference of European Youth at Lausanne. It was attended by a group of observers from the Russian Orthodox Church. After the conference the Russian observers attended a course at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, on 'Theology and Rapid Social Change Today'.

"In August 1960 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches held its annual meeting at St. Andrews (Scotland). It was preceded by plenary meetings of the Commission on Faith and Order and of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. Observers from the Russian Orthodox Church attended the meetings of both these commissions, and also the meetings of the Central Committee. A full report on these meetings was published in the 'Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate'.

"His Holiness Patriarch Alexius sent a letter to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, which was warmly welcomed by the members of the Central Committee.

"In accordance with the letter sent to Archbishop Nikodim as President of the Foreign Department of the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft as General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, I came to Geneva in November 1960 and had conversations at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches with Dr. Visser 't Hooft and some of his staff.

"In March 1961, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Alexius and invested with the full authority of His Holiness and of the Holy Synod, I visited the headquarters of the World Council of Churches for a second time at the head of an official delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church.

"In Geneva our delegation had conversations with representatives of the World Council of Churches, led by Dr. Visser 't Hooft. During these conversations the question arose of the Russian Orthodox Church possibly becoming a member of the World Council of Churches. We liked the spirit of friendly cooperation which representatives of the World Council of Churches showed in discussing the practical questions which this would involve for our church.

"After carefully studying the question, at their meeting on the 28th March 1961 the Commission on Inter-Christian Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed the opinion that the time was ripe for the Russian Orthodox Church to join the World Council of Churches.

"On the 30th March this year, after discussing the report of the Commission for Inter-Christian Relations, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (with His Holiness Patriarch Alexius in the chair) expressed its approval concerning our church's becoming a member of the World Council of Churches.

"The sister churches which attended the Moscow Conference in 1948 have been informed by the Russian Orthodox Church of the development of its relations to the World Council of Churches, i.e. since the negotiations in Utrecht and since the decision of the Patriarch and of the Holy Synod that the time is ripe for the Russian Orthodox Church to become a member of the World Council of Churches.

"The attitude of the Russian Church to the ecumenical question has thus been approved by the Orthodox sister churches."

(see Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate,
No.8, 1961)

Exarch of Central Europe resumes publication of its paper
giving news of the Orthodox churches

The Exarch of Central Europe in Berlin has resumed publication of its paper "Voice of Orthodoxy" (Golos Pravoslaviia), which first appeared in 1954. This project has the blessing of His Holiness Alexius, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

The paper aims at informing its readers about life in the Russian Orthodox Church, but especially "about events in the life of the Orthodox churches in Germany, and with the activities of the Exarchate of Central Europe..." The paper will appear first in German, then probably in German and Russian, and will help to give information and promote understanding between the churches.

Reply to a critic

The 6th number of the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate" contains an article by its editor, Professor A.F. Shishkin, entitled "Reply to a Critic". It is a reply to the article by Father U.A. Floride, a Jesuit, entitled "The Moscow Patriarchate opposes the Catholic Church" which appeared on the 4th February in "Civiltà Cattolica" (Rome).

According to Father Floride, "even if it does not actually praise the anti-communist action of the Vatican, the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate should at any rate refrain from denouncing it."

Professor Shishkin stresses the fact that in his article he is not criticising "Roman Catholicism as such, which is aware of the separated brethren ... but only political Catholicism, which represents the spirit of this world, the spirit of power".

"The Messenger" ("Bratskii Vestnik")

"Bratskii Vestnik", published every six months by the Baptist Union in the USSR, has been late in appearing. It has no printing-press of its own, and its first number this year (January 1961) did not appear until June. (It begins with Christmas greetings 1960).

Then J.I. Shidkov, President of the Council of Baptists and Gospel Christians in the Soviet Union, describes the tasks of the Union. He stresses the need "for all nations to bear in mind the maintenance of international peace".

"Through President Krushchev the government of the USSR has shown the whole world the surest and quickest way to attain permanent peace, i.e. through complete, universal disarmament."

"The sooner the nations take this course, the sooner the world will be freed from the threat of another world war, an atomic war, the most disastrous and destructive form of warfare."

J.I. Shidkov quotes from "the sacred book of the Christians, the Bible", referring to the Prophet Ezekiel (chapter 39, verse 9): "Those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go forth and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, handpikes and spears ..."

"Christians all over the world must now raise their voices in favour of co-existence and disarmament, so that mankind may no longer live under the menace of a cold or hot war."

"Bratskii Vestnik" then comments on "the birth of Jesus Christ", "the Christian Church and international peace", the second conference of European churches at Nyborg (Denmark) in 1960 and its resolution on the urgent need for promoting peace.

There follow articles on "The Babe in Bethlehem" and an appeal to American Christians "to establish a new world order without armaments or war" (written by Alexander Karev, General Secretary of the Baptist Union). He expresses the hope that "Christians in the USA and in the USSR may cooperate with all their will and with all their strength in building up a new peace which has no recourse to armaments or wars, so that the Christmas song of the angels - peace on earth to men of goodwill - may at last become a reality."

"The paper also includes comments on the Gospel of Mark, and on the influence of the apostles, especially of Paul. Also a message broadcast by A. Karev to Christians in America. It concludes with articles on "purity of heart" (purity of thought, the blessedness of the pure heart, how to attain purity of heart, or to be sure that one has attained it, God's ways of purifying man, our sanctification and "our transfiguration into the image of Christ").

A section on the different spheres of work undertaken by the Baptists and Gospel-Christians in the Soviet Union contains the following reports:

Report from Vinnitza (South Russia). "Services are held only on Sundays. The congregation has a healthy spiritual life."

Report from Voronesh (Central Russia). "Our church was filled with worshippers long before the harvest thanksgiving service started. The pulpit and the altar table were decorated with vegetables, cakes, bunches of grapes and other fruit, which were accepted with thanksgiving as tokens of God's mercy (Acts 14:16-17)."

Report from Kiev. "Decisions were taken on all the questions, in a spirit of brotherly love. The congregation has moved into new premises which are more convenient, and where it will be possible to hold regular services in future. In this church the prevailing spirit is one of joyful confidence. The members enjoy the spiritual food which they receive through the services. They try to build up a closer fellowship."

Similar reports are given from Kirovograd and Cherkassk (the foothills of the Caucasus), Kursk and Sumsk (Central Russia). The report from Sumsk says: "The congregation at Jarmolenzev is on a high spiritual level. The Presbyter (Elder) is an old man of 78 who works joyfully in the Lord's vineyard. The members are very satisfied with him."

In the Crimea there are flourishing congregations at Jalta, Eupatoria and other places.

At Bakhchissarai the church celebrated the day of Christian unity on the 30th October 1960. The members thanked God for the unshakable unity which prevails in their congregation.

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Pan-Orthodox conference in Rhodes

The following passages of a report published by the "Ecumenical Press Service" show the active participation which the Orthodox churches of Bulgaria, Rumania and especially the Patriarchate of Moscow have taken in the deliberations of this historic meeting held on the Isle of Rhodes, 20th September to 2nd October 1961.

Metropolitan Chrysostom of Philippi and Kavala, speaking at the opening plenary session of the first pan-Orthodox conference, said that the Orthodox must cooperate in the spirit of fellowship if Christianity is to deal effectively with "the crisis of secularism, paganism, and materialism in the world today."

"At this tragic moment of history the church must find new ways to go out to the world with the offer of salvation", he declared. "It must proclaim its message from the housetops and have no fear of those who can destroy the body, but not the soul."

Directing his remarks to observers from the Anglican and Old Catholic churches, and the World Council of Churches, the octogenarian Greek Orthodox leader declared: "We acknowledge your many blessed actions and your sincere striving for dogmatic truth according to the will of God, and your work to reach a positive basis for unity by removing the unjust calumnies against the Orthodox Church."

The session, which was held in the Church of the Annunciation, opened with a procession of delegates, marching behind a banner bearing the cross and the words, "In this Sign Conquer".

At the same session Archbishop Nikodim, head of the Office of Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, said that it is the desire of all Orthodox churches to establish closer relationships among themselves and with other Christian churches.

Earlier at the opening liturgy, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myron, also a delegate from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, said that the conference could be described in a single phrase as "a conference for the presentation of Orthodoxy on the pan-Orthodox, pan-Christian and world-wide levels."

Twelve autocephalous (independent) Orthodox churches were represented at the conference with strong delegations including metropolitans, priests, monks, and theological professors. These included in addition to the Ecumenical Patriarchate the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow, Yugoslavia, Roumania, and Bulgaria and the churches of Cyprus, Greece, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Specially invited observers were present from the oriental churches of Egypt, Syria, South India, Armenia, and Ethiopia, and from the Old Catholic churches, the Church of England, the Protestant Episcopal Church (USA), and from the World Council of Churches. Several Roman Catholic priests attended in the capacity of journalists.

The week-long conference, which was giving special attention to the question of closer collaboration between Orthodox churches, prepared the study material and agenda items for a pro-Synod meeting, the second in the series of meetings. The third in the series will be the Synod, which will be attended by heads of the churches and other leaders.

The conference concluded with announcement of an agenda for the next pan-Orthodox gathering, the Pro-Synod.

Observers commented that the meeting, the first of its kind in twelve centuries, was marked by an atmosphere of "warm Christian feeling".

A major part of the agenda is given over to relations of Orthodoxy with the remainder of Christendom. Sections deal with Orthodoxy in relation to "ancient oriental churches", the Roman Catholic Church, the churches and confessions arising out of the Reformation, the Old Catholic Church, and the ecumenical movement.

The section on Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement lists as agenda topics for the Pro-Synod, "the presence and participation of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement in the spirit of the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920"; the study of theological and other questions relating to Orthodox participation in the movement, and "the importance of the contribution of Orthodox participation to the orientation of ecumenical thought and action".

The 1920 Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, "first among equals" of the leaders of Eastern Orthodoxy, advocated the formation of a "league of churches" 28 years before the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

The section on Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism suggests the Pro-Synod make an "examination of points of agreement and disagreement concerning the faith, administration, and ecclesiastical activity of this church, especially propaganda, uniates, and proselytism". It also asks study of the "maintenance of relations according to the spirit of the love of Christ".

The section on the ancient oriental churches, the Armenian, Coptic Ethiopian, Syrian, and Malabar (South India), all of which had strong delegations of observers attending the conference, urges "maintenance of friendly relations for re-establishing union by exchange of visits of professors and students, and by contacts of a theological character".

It also suggests the Pro-Synod consider studies of the faith, worship, and administration of these churches and collaboration with them at ecumenical meetings on "practical questions".

Speaking of Orthodox relations with churches and confessions arising out of the Reformation, it suggests "the study of the possibilities for the cultivation of relations and further rapprochement with them, and especially with the Episcopalians and Anglicans, in light of their present positive attitudes towards the Orthodox Church".

Messages also were received from the heads of all the autocephalous Orthodox churches, as well as from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the officers of the World Council of Churches, which was represented by three observers. The World Council of Churches message relayed "respectful fraternal greetings", and said the World Council of Churches officers "pray that your meeting may strengthen the witness of Orthodoxy in the whole world and its participation in the World Council of Churches".

The first part of the agenda for the Pro-Synod meeting covers a wide range of subjects dealing with internal matters of the Orthodox churches. These include: questions of faith and dogma; aspects of church life - the encouragement of more active lay-participation, discipline, liturgical renewal, and wider use of the Old Testament in worship; church order; relations between Orthodox churches; the witness of Orthodoxy in the world; theological themes; and social problems.

At an earlier session Archbishop Nikodin, head of the Russian delegation, read a 19-page report, asking the conference to adopt a forceful attitude on world political problems, including "general and complete disarmament", and aid to countries under colonial rule to acquire self-rule. By a decision of the plenary session the proposals were discussed in committee which was chaired by Archbishop Nikodin of the Moscow Patriarchate. The result was that the section dealing with the witness of Orthodoxy in the world included the following items: "Orthodoxy and racial discrimination", "application of the Christian ideas of peace, freedom, brotherhood and love among peoples", and "Christian duty in areas of rapid social change".

Russians given permission to visit Mt. Athos (Greece)

Reversing an earlier decision the Greek government has given permission for two bishops and one layman, members of the Russian delegation to the pan-Orthodox conference held at Rhodes, to visit Mt. Athos.

The decision permits Archbishop Nikodin, who headed the Russian Orthodox group to the conference, and two of his delegation to visit the famous monasteries on the peninsula before returning home.

The Holy Community of Mt. Athos is composed of 20 sovereign monasteries of which 17 are Greek, one Russian, one Bulgarian, and one Serb. There is also a Rumanian skêtê (sub-monastery).

C H U R C H N E W S : H U N G A R Y

Preparations of the Hungarian churches for the Third Assembly
of the World Council of Churches

It was more than a year ago that the Study Commission of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary sent a statement to the World Council of Churches on the preparatory material concerning the main theme and subsidiary topics of the New Delhi Assembly. The statement was then published in the July-August number, 1961, of the "Theologiai Szemle", so giving access to the wider public of pastors conferences, consistories and parishioners to the themes of the coming Third Assembly.

The Study Commission has continued its work on the preparatory material. It was decided at its latest session that the study material dealing with the assembly themes in foreign theological literature should be summed up and evaluated and that a thoroughgoing study of the relevant Bible passages be added to the witness of the Hungarian churches.

(Hungarian Church Press, 19.9.1961)

"Events in the Oikoumene"
Professor Kadar's synopsis in the "Theologiai Szemle"

The jointly edited periodical of the Hungarian Evangelical Churches, the "Theologiai Szemle" publishes in its latest number a synopsis with the above title by Dr. Imre Kadar, Professor of Theology, responsible editor of the "Theologiai Szemle", to review the recent events of importance in international church life.

The article which appears in the customary column "The Editor's Comments" deals with the recent events in the Hungarian "interior oikoumene" - as well as with the All-Christian Peace Congress and the rapprochement between the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church. It also deals with the - by no means uncritically acceptable - reasons which prompt the Roman Catholic side to make some statements of a positive nature about this rapprochement. The author calls our attention to the increasingly audacious tendencies in the field of Mariology. "Rome, on the one hand, persists in deepening the doctrinal gulf that separates it from Protestantism and Orthodoxy; on the other hand, it stretches a rope over the abyss and cajoles the heretical and schismatic 'brethren' to undertake acts of rope-dancing to the tune of Rome's anti-communist march. Yet the success of these ventures appears to be ever more doubtful. Orthodoxy has repeatedly spoken out quite clearly about the politics of Rome. And those Protestant leaders of the Western world, who, while 'by-passing the questions of faith and doctrine' would show their willingness to enter into a political alliance with Rome, in the sense of a false unity, will isolate themselves from the believing masses of the Church. Yet the Vatican, too, does the same, when, instead of serving the common human cause, it puts the seal of infallible authority to concocted fables, and, instead of promoting the welfare and peace of mankind, it seeks allies among the other churches to be serviceable to military

interests. After the All-Christian Peace Congress, at which the bulk of Orthodoxy joined hands in the spirit of brotherly unity with the peace-loving forces of world Protestantism for saving the peace, it will be in an increasing measure that all kinds and ranks of the enemies of peace will be exposed and isolated", writes the editor of the "Theologiai Szemle".

(Hungarian Church Press, 1.8.1961)

Liberal giving in small congregations

Not counting the work contributed free of charge, the members of the Belvardgyula Reformed Church gave nearly 10.000 Forints for repairing the parsonage. The membership, including infants and old people, is less than 100. They also spent close to 2.000 Forints on the interior repairs of the church building and they decided that the whole building should be repaired. They also raised the pastor's salary. It was under these propitious circumstances that their young pastor was recently inducted by Bishop Istvan Szamosközi.

The Alap Reformed Church has 500 members. Since June, 1961, they have spent 18.000 Forints on modernising the church building. The work contributed free of charge has so far been worth about 6.000 Forints. The women of the congregation made new covers for the communion table, the pulpit and the pastor's bench.

Another small congregation is the Csókaly Reformed Church. In this village the Reformed parishioners have over the last five years completely renovated their church building. In the course of this work a beautiful chandelier, new carpets and covers have also been acquired to enhance the beauty of the renovated church building.

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CHURCH NEWS : CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Communication of the Presidium of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czechoslovakia

The Presidium of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czechoslovakia meeting in Bratislava (22nd and 23rd September 1961) published the following statement concerning the present international situation:

"We are aware that we stand in the midst of decisive months of the post-war international situation. In this serious moment there is still time for negotiations. As believing members of our churches we do not yield to the fatalistic feeling that a new catastrophe is unescapable. We rather realise the great responsibility of our faith but also of our common sense to cope without fear and prejudice with the realities of contemporary international relations.

"We are aware that our churches and the so-called Christian society have not done enough for preventing the last war and for easing the tense and dangerous situation of today. In the name of our churches and in the light of our faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ we approach members of our own churches as well as our brethren and sisters in churches abroad with the petition to foster in their own places the atmosphere of trust and hope and by their comprehension of the contemporary events, by their prayer, advice and work to support statesmen in their difficult and responsible work.

"We are faced not only by political and economic problems or by a mere contest of power. Humanly speaking, everything is at stake today - life on this earth, life of our brethren and sisters, of our children, of those who are to come after us.

"In deep seriousness of our faith we express the conviction that it is possible to find a solution of all difficult and dangerous problems of today which would be acceptable for all nations and could create pre-requisites for the salutary development of all mankind and the atmosphere of lasting peace and real creative cooperation of all nations. In this sense we wish to work in our own environment, and we pray that our brethren in the Western countries, particularly in Western Germany, similarly influence their governments.

"Disarmament and peace treaty with Germany belong to the most important problems of today. People everywhere desire peace and eagerly expect that the responsible powers will agree on the principles of universal and total disarmament under strict international control. They are disturbed by constant delays in these negotiations, particularly because the proposals for disarmament have been submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations by the Soviet Union and it has been agreed in principle that they should become the basis of negotiations. If some statesmen are of the opinion that those proposals are one-sided, they should submit their counter-proposals in all sincerity of heart and above all, all parties should start concrete discussions, because negotiation is the fundamental means for dealing with all controversial questions.

"We know well that there are many potential centres of the danger of war. However, for us who belong to the nations of Czechoslovakia, the danger associated with the present situation in Germany is the most serious one. We pray our brethren and friends in other countries not to forget that we speak from a region covered by millions of graves from the second world war. Our uneasiness is not dictated by local and national motives but by fear of a catastrophe menacing Europe and the whole world. Every war starting in the centre of Europe would necessarily develop into a world disaster.

"In this sense we understand the apprehensions and back the desires of our people as expressed also in the declaration of the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on the necessity to conclude the peace treaty with Germany.

"In spite of all differences existing in respect of the problem of Germany it is our opinion that even now it should be possible to agree on following steps to be taken:

"To conclude a peace treaty with both the German states which are a historic reality today;

"to confirm and guarantee the frontiers of Germany as they were fixed on the basis of the agreement of the four powers immediately after the end of the second world war;

"to settle the problem of Western Berlin by making it a free city with a statute guaranteed by the four powers and the UNO;

"to include both the neutralised and disarmed German states in the zone without atomic weapons.

"We are convinced that the peaceful settlement of these questions will be to the detriment of no party concerned but on the contrary to the benefit of the whole of Europe, and of the whole world including the German people.

"Our situation and our struggle for peace confirm the work which we have been doing in the Christian Peace Conference and which we desire to continue with still greater determination for the victory of world peace, for removing causes of the cold war and for strengthening friendship between the nations.

"We pray our brethren and sisters in other countries to receive our words with the same earnestness with which we address them. We have a bitter experience of our own with fascism and its manifestations. We never can forget the Munich catastrophe and the sacrifices of lives of our pastors and members we had then to bring in the second world war. As we do not wish that anybody should have to make a similar experience, we ask all believing Christians and other people of good will to join efforts with ours in seeking ways towards reaching these goals."

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CHURCH NEWS : POLAND

Polish Lutheran churches meet with Roman Catholics

Lutheran and Roman Catholic churchmen of this country have held a formal meeting together for the first time, a Catholic newspaper published in Cracow has reported.

The paper said they discussed the importance of the ecumenical movement, and the need for cooperation in areas of common concern where theological differences are not involved.

The report published by "Tygodnik Powszechny" said that the leader of the Lutheran participants, Dr. Zigmunt Michelis, told the meeting that the unity of Christendom should be the "topmost aim" of churches today. He said the appeals for unity voiced by Pope John XXIII "cannot be interpreted otherwise than as the voice of God Himself".

Mr. Michelis said that one of the dividing factors between Protestant and Catholic churches is the "mariology cult" in the Catholic Church.

"This may cause the dangerous situation in which it could be forgotten that the whole centre of Christian life is Christ", he said. "on the other hand, Protestants often unjustifiably ignore Mary's role and this should be remedied."

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A T H E I S T P R O P A G A N D A I N T H E U.S.S.R.

Mr. Khrushchev on religion at the 22nd Congress of the Party

Mr. N.S. Khrushchev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR said in his six hours speech at the 22nd Congress of the Party in Moscow on the problem of religion:

"Communist education intends to liberate the human consciousness from all religious prejudices and superstitions which still hamper individuals in the USSR from expressing themselves fully.

"What we need is a well-thought-out, harmonious system of atheist education on a scientific basis which would embrace the various strata and groups of our population, and avert the spreading of religious conceptions particularly among children and young people."

A Soviet-Marxist textbook on the history of religion and atheism needed

The anti-religious statements of Lenin are summed up in a new publication entitled "Lenin on Religion" (published by the Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1960, edited by I.A. Kryvelev, 235 pp).

"The anti-religious policy of the Communist Party today is still based on Lenin's unequivocal attitude to religion". The book relates that Lenin, who had already renounced religion during the lifetime of I.I. Skvorzov-Stepanov (one of the earliest pioneers of Bolshevism) had suggested that he should write a short "History of Religion opposing all Religions" - including the Kantian and other idealist and agnostic forms of faith. This history was to have an appendix giving the sources for the history of atheism, and the connection between the church and bourgeois society. But "Skvorzov-Stepanov was growing old and could not fulfil Lenin's request."

Kryvelev writes: "Unfortunately Lenin's suggestion has still not been followed up. We still have no Soviet-Marxist textbook on the history of religion and atheism, although reliable monographies have been written

on isolated religious problems which could be used as a basis for such a textbook." Kryvelev adds that, when speaking of the need for a history of religion, Lenin insisted that "this history should be directly anti-religious".

Lenin thereby expressed a profound idea: "that if the history of religion is described in its true light, it is bound to deal a blow at all forms of religion. Our scientifically-trained collaborators must now write a history of religion on these lines, which will destroy the halo surrounding every form of religious obscurantism."

Brotherhood based on a curse

"Brotherhood, that is the most precious word to the worker on strike in Belgium, to the partisans in Algeria, to the peasants and soldiers revolting in Cuba - for all who fight for freedom and justice...

"For us, builders of Communism, the word 'Brotherhood' denotes new relations between people in the collective, between the hard-working creators of abundance and happiness who share the same views. But the word 'brotherhood' also has a tone of religious obscurantism, such as one hears in our churches - completely cut off from the glorious achievements of our time.

"The preachers of religious morality represent religion as the only power which can unite men. They maintain that the human ties which spring from collective action are not pleasing to God.

"Religion separates people into the pure and the impure, into heretics and believers. It talks about the special status of believers, and regards unbelievers as second-class people."

"The Christian religion teaches that man is cursed from his birth, just as his forefathers were, and as his descendants will be, as a punishment for the sin of Adam and Eve. The human race bears the burden of original sin, and it is this original sin which binds mankind together. This brotherhood is therefore condemned at the outset as being equivalent to God's curse.

"Equality? In the better world promised by the Christian religion, equality does not come off very well. For in paradise there are different ranks, each with appropriate signs of honour. There are angels, cherubim and seraphim, the saints, the blessed, etc... The Church does everything it can to fill the believers with servile fear, submissiveness, the idea that they are lost and valueless.

"But life sometimes subjects people to trials in order to measure the limits of their physical and spiritual strength. For instance, not long ago four Soviet soldiers were abandoned to the ocean currents. Where can man be more conscious of his weakness than in the midst of the wild forces of the ocean? But those four soldiers conquered the ocean. How did they do it? Did they put up a prayer?...

Kriuchkovsky, one of the four soldiers, said: "The only thing we had to help us was our friendship. We have been trained in comradeship." That is "the unconquerable spiritual force of the collective, the spirit of true brotherhood".

In that hour of superhuman trial in face of death, "the bonds of comradeship held firm. The heroism of those four soldiers is a symbol of the victory of the collective over the natural elements of the ocean."

Each for himself

The symbol of religious brotherhood is different. "Religious brotherhood is a brotherhood between people who are not free, people who are bound together by God's curse, by loneliness and weakness. These people await their fate in fear and trembling, they await their death or rescue, and pray for salvation in the life beyond - salvation each for himself."

The myth of divine redemption has always been needed in the church, in order to perpetuate social inequality. People like to have someone to console them, someone to protect them and stand up for them. This protector has condemned men to suffering and hardship. But he showed them also how to alleviate their own sufferings, not in this world (it is true) but in some world beyond. The way to that other world is through prayer and fasting and observing the rites of the church, which express themselves mainly in abject petitions for the mercy of Almighty God. The purpose of all this is to inculcate fear into people, and to persuade them that it is better for them to pray all together in unison, this being more effective than individual prayer. In other words, "the louder the chorus of prayer, the readier God is to hear it...."

Not a bad argument in favour of separating oneself from the group! But every individual who prays in the group is praying only for himself. It is therefore merely a cult of egoistic calculation, a cult of personal interest, and the sanctification of the old, obsolete bourgeois ethic. It is not a brotherhood but merely a speculation with the concept of brotherhood. Association in the choir of petition, hypocritical talk about the sacredness of brotherhood in Christ, is contrary to true human brotherhood.

But supposing God really were the gracious advocate of all men? How could one prove it?

According to the Christian view, the purpose of life is not to live a good life but to die a holy death, and afterwards to hope for God's mercy. Anyone who doubts His mercy must wait for thousands of years until the archangels blow their trumpets, the dead rise from their graves, and the Day of Judgment dawns.

All the promises of the Christian religion therefore depend for fulfilment on that Day of Judgment, fixed by God. And the promise of reward (for the individual's earthly life) will be generously met on that day, like a bill that has fallen due... "As long as that Day is still far off, the church exercises its right to inculcate rules of life and moral standards into its members, and thereby controls their souls and their destinies."

Philanthropy

In Russia the Orthodox Church teaches that in addition to prayer and the rites of the church, people must be bound together by philanthropy. But our generation which has grown up in the Komsomol has only read in books about the philanthropy of wealthy ladies and religious gas-bags.

Christian philanthropy is nothing but a form of charity. From the religious point of view it means the promise of a reward in the life beyond. If one asks a Baptist, or some other Christian, what attracted him to the church, his reply is usually "they helped me". But if, after receiving help, a person does not join the religious group "he soon finds himself dropped by those Christian philanthropists".

On the other hand, the policy of the Soviet Union is based on purely human principles of helpfulness, brotherhood and equal rights... how different from the deceitful policy of the Christian philanthropists.

Your brother - your enemy

The servants of the One God find all sorts of opportunities to apply the commandment to love their brethren. How many "children" there are in Mother Church, in the Christian sects and movements, Orthodox, Old Believers, Baptist, Catholic, Adventist, etc. "Today the question is being considered of effecting closer union between these different trends in the church".

The truth is very different.

Not long ago a Baptist preacher sharply criticised the Old Believers (who separated off from the Orthodox Church in the 17th century because, among other reasons, they wanted to cross themselves with two fingers instead of three). Even while he was speaking there was a transparency hanging over his head with the Baptists' creed, "God is love".

All these Christian groups maintain that they are the only real heirs to the Christian faith. So they all believe that none of the other sects will be awakened by the angel on the Day of Judgment.

There is a well-known myth in the Bible, that men decided to build a tower which should reach to heaven. But God created a confusion of tongues, so that they could no longer understand each other. And then God scattered these blasphemous builders all over the world ...

"A very instructive myth! It expresses the creed of religion, its campaign against human cooperation in joint work, which it regards as an arrogant purpose of the human mind..."

"Nevertheless the workers have now united, in order to create happiness here on earth."

Not only individuals, but whole nations have found their common language, the "language of brotherhood". Men have reached heaven. They have penetrated into the cosmos. And when all men are brothers, then the era of communism will begin. That time is not far off.

Atheist education and the elimination of the
religious mentality

(A summary of anti-religious writings)

Soviet philosophy is dealing more and more with the problem how to develop social consciousness, a social mentality, in contrast to the religious outlook, the individualist religious attitude, which aims at obtaining control of the sphere of social psychology...

Religious psychology is primarily theological, i.e. a religious and therefore a false theory, which claims to be complete, systematic and logical.

The religious outlook is something more than an ideology, however. For "the religious concepts of the average believer strike us not as a complete dogmatic system but as a collection of vague, rather chaotic ideas, mythical concepts and feelings". So the problem of religious psychology and religious ideology in its influence on human society is extremely important.

For "according to Marx, religion is a distorted reflection in the human mind of the real forces which affect the daily life of man". But the influence of religious ideology on the masses "is only successful, if the ideas and dogmas worked out by the theologians correspond to the spiritual struggle and the ideology of the masses."

For example, the Christ-myth could never have appeared as it did, had it not corresponded to the ideas of hundreds of thousands of people at that time. Christian Messianism sprang from the passivity of the masses who were powerless to overthrow their oppressors.

The social-economic changes which are taking place under socialism have undermined the social roots of religion. This does not mean, however, that in our (socialist) society today there is no religion... It still plays an important role. But its position in society and its attitude to the economic basis of the (new) society are changing.

There are no anti-social concepts on which a religious mentality could be built. "The religious mentality is no longer inevitable." Religion is therefore a survival of an obsolete, conservative concept of society ... And religious psychology is more difficult to eradicate than religious ideology. It is easier to bring new ideas into religious ideology than to change religious mentality.

Religious customs which have been observed for generations are a very formidable obstacle to new ideas and the new view of life. Nevertheless "they are doomed to extinction ... but this is a slow process."

Although the social basis of religion no longer exists in the USSR, the professional clergy are trying harder than ever to influence the minds of Soviet people.

On the religious side

The characteristic error of bourgeois religious psychology is that the psychology of the believers persists despite the fact that it is isolated from the social conditions which created it. The religious concepts and feelings are judged on a purely individualistic level, which prevents a scientific understanding of the causes of religious psychology, and paves the way for a religious apologetic by maintaining that religion is independent of external conditions and therefore eternal and ineradicable.

The religious sense ... is a special sense inborn in man. In every human being there is a continual struggle for religion, for God - a feeling of which people are often not even aware and which is therefore really emotional...

This inner struggle of the soul for God may become obscured, it may not come to full expression, and may therefore remain ineffective. It may be stifled by circumstances. Nevertheless it is alive in everyone, and it is the church's task "to bring all men into fellowship with God".

On the atheist side

The mistake which atheism makes (A.B. Pavelkin "What is Religion?", Gospolitizdat, 1960) is that, while rightly rejecting religion as inherent in human nature, it does not pay sufficient attention to the fact that "these emotions are directed toward something specific".

It is this "something specific" in religious feeling which must be subjected to careful analysis by atheism. For this "specific something" consists not so much in human religious emotion as in the object to which that emotion is directed. Theology interprets "feeling" as "the emotional attitude to the object". In this sense all "emotions" connected with man's religious faith are expressions of ordinary (positive or negative) human feelings. Thus religious "fear and trembling" is merely a form of ordinary fear, and the "religious emotion" of love is only a distortion of the human emotion of love. The same applies to the other emotions of believers. The objects to which those emotions are directed - the spirit, God, the devil, etc. - do not exist at all. The fact that religious feelings are directed towards an illusory, imaginary object which does not really exist has a profound influence on the role played by these feelings in human society. This was already recognised by atheists before the time of Marx.

* * *

There is no justification whatever for the idea (stressed by Christians) that the fear of death can only be overcome by faith in God and in the immortality of the soul (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, No. 4, 1958). One cannot simply regard the fear of death as a biological, inherent instinct of self-preservation. "For man's natural biological instincts and reactions have been transformed into social instincts and reactions."

Man fears death most of all when his own ego has become the centre of the universe for him, i.e. when his existence is based on egoism, and he makes use of other people to serve his own ego-centric ends.

So it is not a coincidence that in contemporary existentialism the fear of death is one of the main themes. Hence in the antagonistic social order the religious myth about personal immortality was preserved for such a long time as a consolation for the masses.

The fear of death is overcome best by people who are united by common aims with others, so that their individual lives form part of the common effort. For the fear of death can only be overcome by genuine collectivism and real humanism, which are rooted in (the ideal of) community.

This, of course, does not mean that in the Communist society people will have no fear at all of death. It means rather that Communists will best overcome their fear of death by being rooted in the feeling of collectivity, devoting themselves to the common cause, and living with courage and self-sacrifice...

"But the clergy exploit man's fear of death for their own ends."

* * *

As for man's love of God and his neighbour, preached by the Christians, this requires universal forgiveness, humility, consideration and love for everyone, however they may behave. This talk about love to all men is hypocritical and false, because it ignores the real relations between people and shuts its eyes to the fact that in the class-society the class-struggle is the only way to achieve emancipation and social progress.

All the efforts made by churchmen and preachers to "modernise" the Christian teaching about loving one's neighbour are therefore doomed to fail. All attempts to "purify or improve Christian teaching" are futile. "Christian humanism is a weak form of humanism which has nothing in common with human relations as they really are."

Conclusions

Scientific propaganda for atheism can only prove successful if it is based on the scientific analysis of religion, and if it shows the opportunities which exist for influencing the mentality and conduct of the masses.

This analysis must be based on the concept of the collectivity. And because religion influences people's feelings as well as their minds, scientific atheist propaganda should also be directed towards influencing people's emotions.

Criticism of religious dogmas must be lively, intelligent, clear and convincing, so that it makes a direct appeal to people's hearts.

Clear, intelligent anti-religious propaganda, as given in the story of "The Miraculous Icon" by V. Tendriakov (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches", No. 4, 1959) may have more influence on people's mentality than dozens of boring anti-religious pamphlets.

It is also extremely important to encourage anti-religious ceremonies instead of religious celebrations (church festivals, weddings, funerals, etc.).

Much has already been done, but we must go further "in order to find the theoretical solution to the problems of religious psychology, and how to perfect our practical work in order to liberate the workers from their religious prejudices".

The schools cannot be neutral

This is the title of an article published in the September number of the anti-religious paper "Nauka i Religia" (No. 9, 1961).

"The Soviet schools cannot be neutral, because too many of the pupils are still under the influence of religion.

"For instance a pupil named V. Petrunitshev attending the village school at Khlebnitz (Jaroslav district) was under the influence of the Orthodox priest Nikodim for years until he got into the 5th class. He used to assist the priest in the church during the liturgy, this being a form of preparation for entering the theological seminary.

"The Baptist leaders in Tashkent were not afraid of infringing the Soviet laws relating to worship. They organised Bible courses for young people, which were attended by 50 pupils between 16 and 18 years of age. Afterwards they were all baptised. And their school teachers, with unpardonable timidity, saw all this going on and did not consider it necessary to interfere."

The article goes on to say: "According to an estimate made in 1959, 75% of the population in the USSR was born after the October Revolution. All these young and middle-aged people have been educated in the Soviet schools. And yet some of them still believe in religion. What is the explanation?"

Answer: "In the first place there are still quite a large number of children from religious homes attending the schools. These children have, so to speak, absorbed religion with their mother's milk.

"In the second place, many boys and girls come into contact with clergy and members of sects outside school. Consequently these young people are also drawn into the net of religion, although they come from atheist homes.

"Religious ideas are sometimes instilled by force into young people by their parents or teachers. Hard struggles occur between home and school about the ideas which should be taught to children.

"The teachers have instructions to maintain a neutral, tolerant attitude towards religion. This is expressed in the educational system on which materialist teaching is based...

"The secondary-school curriculum worked out by the Academy of Pedagogy and approved by the Ministry of Education of the USSR either says nothing at all about how to bring atheism into the different subjects on the curriculum, or else exaggerates it.

"There are, however, plenty of anti-religious pamphlets available for pupils in Soviet schools, and these have borne results in schools such as those in the Dzershinsky district of Moscow, in White Russia, in the Oblast' of Krasnodarsk, etc.

"In many of these schools, with the help of the headmaster, atheist propaganda has been organised for and by the pupils. Programmes on anti-religious subjects are broadcast to the schools; evenings are arranged when questions about religion can be asked and answered; experiments in chemistry are shown to prove the fallacy of belief in miracles.

"This anti-religious propaganda, which is organised by the pupils themselves, is also directed towards religious-minded parents, for whom special evenings are being planned."

The sacred work of education

"It is an undeniable fact that the younger generation of Soviet citizens attending our schools today are mainly atheists...

"But this fact does not mean that we can take things easily. It is too soon to lay aside our ideological weapons. For religious prejudice is not always a relic from the past... Our school-children are full of these prejudices even today. The unformed minds of many young people are still being poisoned by them.

"We give some examples from the district of Tshernigov.

"Out of 22 school-children in the first class of the primary school at Maximin (Ostersk district), 10 know how to make the sign of the cross; three know a number of prayers by heart, and one girl can even sing prayers.

"At the Kreshtshatik school (Olishev district) 15 out of the 25 children in the second class are under strong religious influence.

"On Sundays and church-festivals in Tshernigov one can see hundreds of young school-children being taken to church by their parents or relations."

"Nauka i Religia" then quotes the well-known saying of N.K. Krupskaya, the widow of Lenin: "It is my opinion that anti-religious propaganda must start very young, even before children begin school, because today children are interested in these questions very young."

"Unfortunately", continues the paper, "the syllabus does not do much to help the teachers to give an anti-religious tone to the subjects which they teach.

"The same applies to the syllabus brought out by the Ministry of Education for the 1960/61 school year, which lays little stress on this task. For instance, a 15-page introduction to the Physics syllabus does not say a word about how to answer the ideological questions which this subject constantly brings up.

"On the other hand in the 9th school at Tshernigov the pupils have formed a 'Young Atheists' Association'. Any pupil from the 5th to the 10th class can belong to this Association, if he or she states himself or herself prepared to carry on atheist propaganda in the schools and among the population... Every member is obliged to speak on some atheist subject at meetings at least twice a month."

Another article in "Nauka i Religia" states that in the neighbourhood of Kuibyshev the Orthodox Bishop Evsenii was asked, why the young people did not attend prayers in church. He replied frankly, but with regret, "They don't come. Even our own children stop believing in God as soon as they go to school."

The anti-religious struggle in the schools

"Komsomolskaia Prawda" of the 17th June 1961 has an article pointing out that school children in Tashkent are complaining about their religious parents.

"I want to be a pioneer", said a little girl called Lida. Another girl named Valia "has been forced against her will to accompany her mother to the prayer-meetings of the Baptists ever since she could walk."

"How can the Komsomol in Tashkent justify its own passivity in face of these facts?" asks "Komsomolskaia Prawda". "How can the Komsomol in Tashkent accept the attitude of the superfluous third in this tragedy? Why do our teachers behave in such a helpless way in their anti-religious struggle? They have been trained in our colleges after all."

"There are some judges in Tashkent who pronounce judgment against (Soviet) public opinion. For a serious question has to be faced: despite the fact that our legislation recognises freedom of conscience, and that our citizens are free to profess any religion they please, must not our young people be protected against being compelled to have religious instruction?"

"Uchitelskaia Gazeta" of the 8th June, 1961, writes: "Does the headmaster do anything? A school-girl called Dussia ran away from her parents because they made her say prayers and attend church. Dussia was not allowed to join the 'Pioneers' (the Communist organisation for children), nor to go to the cinema or the theatre. She had to fast and pray. Dussia couldn't stand it any longer. She didn't want to be 'pious' so she ran away from home for good.

"When asked how long he had known that Dussia's parents treated her in this way, the headmaster replied 'Since she ran away from home'.

"Question: 'Have you any other children in your school who are being brought up to believe in religion?'

"Answer: 'I can't say. There are hundreds of children in my school. I can't keep an eye on them all.'"

Atheist pamphlets for children

"Nauka i Religia", the anti-religious monthly, recommends a number of atheist pamphlets for children in its September number. They are introduced as follows: "A number of anti-religious publications for children have recently appeared. Books of this kind are published by the Detgiz publishing house (the state publishers for children's books), by the papers 'Sovjetskaia Rossia' (Soviet Russia), by 'Molodaia Gvardia' (the Guard of Youth), and others."

These pamphlets which deal with different questions, are devoted to the struggle against religion. Religious problems as such are not fully dealt with, however.

These books are usually published both in a popular edition, and in an art-edition. They are intended for young people attending secondary schools or colleges.

The pamphlets deal with various anti-religious themes. Some of them explain the origin of belief in God and of belief in miracles. Others disclose religion as an instrument of oppression and show up the clergy as what they are. Other pamphlets deal with the various forms of superstition.

"One short book is devoted to the morals of the clergy in the Russian and Greek churches. It is entitled 'The Life and Experiences of Zamorgh' (Detgiz, 1960), and is intended for the libraries of secondary schools." The story is as follows:

"A school-boy meets several members of the clergy, who all make a bad impression upon him. The boy enters a Greek Orthodox monastery. He discovers that the monks are mean and avaricious. The monks tell the boy not to say anything about what he has seen in the monasteries. But the boy has realised that the monks do not spend their time in prayer and fasting, but in eating well, drinking, playing cards and money-making."

New atheist publications

Two new standard works on atheism have been published in the Soviet Union. The "Gospolitizdat" (state publisher for political literature), which publishes the documents of the Ministry of Culture, has recently brought out two standard works, the contents of which are almost identical.

The first of these books is edited by the Philosophical Institute of the Academy of Sciences and is entitled "Osnovy Nauchnogo Ateizma" (Bases of Scientific Atheism). Its purpose is explained in its preface: "to offer the reader a systematic description of the bases of scientific atheism."

This large new handbook on atheism (460 pages, total number printed 100,000 copies) is intended "not only for anti-religious propaganda as such but also for everyone who is seriously interested in atheism".

It is a generally-understandable handbook of scientific atheism, worked out by the staff of the museum for the History of Religion and Atheism in Leningrad, in cooperation with qualified members of the ethnographic and historical Institute in the European and Asian areas of the USSR.

The book is divided into three sections: the first is on religion, atheism and science; the second on the origin and development of religion, with criticism of religious doctrines; the third on the building up of Communism in the USSR and the elimination of religious survivals. It sets out to prove that "before the religious epoch of their existence mankind lived in freedom without religion", i.e. happily; and that religion is therefore an artificial thing superimposed in order to promote the exploitation of man by man.

The preface urges the readers to let the editors know what they think of the new book. The book is in Russian, but according to a press-notice will also be translated into the various different languages of the Socialist People's Republics.

The second book entitled "Sputnik Ateista" (The Atheist's Companion) deals with almost exactly the same subjects. This is a revised, enlarged edition containing about 500 pages, total edition 180,000 copies.

The first edition of this standard work on atheism appeared two years ago (See "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches", No 2, 1960) and was criticised in the USSR as not entirely successful as a means of atheist propaganda. In this new edition account has been taken of these criticisms.

"Sputnik Ateista" contains some anti-religious illustrations showing objects in the Museum for the History of Religion and Atheism in Leningrad.

Atheist bibliography

It would take many pages to give a complete list of the new publications dealing with atheism in the USSR. We therefore confine ourselves to mentioning a few atheist publications which have appeared during the last few months. They are taken from "Novye Knigi" (New Books), published by the Ministry of Education, which covers all the printed matter published in the Soviet Union (except newspaper-articles, for which there is a special body).

"Formy i Metody Ateisticheskoi Propagandy" (Forms and Methods of Atheist Propaganda);

"Zabavnaia Biblia" (The amusing Bible), translated from the French book by L. Taxil;

"Protiv t'my" (Against the Darkness). Reading book with selections from valuable anti-religious writings;

"Sto Voprosov i Otvetov po Ateizmu" (100 Questions and Answers relating to Atheism);

"Mysli o Religii" (Thoughts about Religion), aphorisms and extracts from the works of materialists, philosophers, scientists and authors;

"Narod o Religii" (The People and Religion);

"Pravoslavny Prasniki" (Festivals of the Orthodox Church);

- "Tserkov' i Feodalizm na Russi" (The Church and Feudalism in Russia) by N.M. Gantaev, published by the Academy of Sciences in the USSR, 25,000 copies. Price 27 kopeks;
- "Year-Book of the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism", published by the Academy of Sciences, Leningrad, 464 pages, 2,000 copies. Price 2 roubles 67 kopeks;
- "Ja Idu k Veruiushchim" (I appeal to Believers) by F. Baturin, report of a propagandist on the methods to be applied when dealing with believers. Gospolitizdat, 48 pages, 85,000 copies. Price 6 kopeks;
- "Razdumie o Vere" (Thought on religious belief) by A.B. Iakushevitch. Gospolitizdat, 130,000 copies. Price 11 kopeks. (The author was formerly a priest in the Church of the Resurrection in Zaporozhie);
- "Predvidenie Nauki i Prorotchestva Religii" (Scientific Prophecies and Religious Prophecies) by V.A. Mezentsev. Voenisdat (Soviet Army Press), 130 pages. Price 21 kopeks;
- "Proiskhozhdenie i sushchnost' buddisma-lamaizma" (The Origin and Nature of Buddhism-Lamaism) by G.I. Pubaev and Semitchov. Ulan-Ude, Buriat SSR, 4,000 copies. Price 5 kopeks;
- "Papstvo" (The Papacy) by M. Sheinman, published by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. 210 pages, 23,000 copies. Price 32 kopeks;
- "My porvali s Religiei" (We have broken away from religion), reports from ex-believers. Voenisdat, 25,000 copies. Price 44 kopeks.

Anti-religious humour

The satirical fortnightly paper "Krokodil" occasionally publishes anti-church caricatures and jokes. "An anti-religious lecturer returns home from a lecture and finds his wife out. She was still at church" (Krokodil, No. 21, 1951).

The same number contains a report entitled "Earl's Court" on the Soviet exhibition in London, at which Jurii Gagarin received such an ovation.

Visitors to the exhibition wrote their impressions in its "guest-book". One of these entries reads, "All that from a country that is only 44 years old! England, for God's sake wake up!"

"Krokodil" writes: "Gagarin has transformed the English character. Those reserved, self-controlled people were full of enthusiasm."

But "a rather shabby preacher in Hyde Park said he was not impressed by Gagarin's achievement. He tried to convince his audience that the first cosmonaut was not this Russian but God Himself."

There is a drawing showing the Sputnik rotating round the earth (drawn from the model on view at the exhibition) and two nuns looking at it. "These nuns laden with prospectuses of the exhibition stood there for a long time in the Hall of Space. They must have been asking themselves whether it is possible to believe at the same time in God and in Gagarin."

The "Krokodil" (No. 15, 1961) relates the following story:

"A young couple in Western Germany hears that happy marriages are made in heaven. But owing to some oversight, heaven forgot to allocate a subsidy to the newly-weds to buy furniture for their new home. A thick pane of glass separates Hans and Gretchen from the furniture and other domestic equipment they need. And that pane of glass means that the furniture is further from their reach than heaven itself."

A 20th century crusader

"Nauka i Religia" (No. 9, 1961) devotes four caricature-illustrated pages to the world-famous evangelist and "20th century crusader" Billy Graham.

The American crusader, "who recently made an evangelistic safari trip to Africa", also stayed in the Soviet Union a short while ago (as a tourist, of course). About this stay in the USSR the paper writes:

"Billy Graham visited the Baptist oratory in Moscow and the Orthodox abbey in Zagorsk (near Moscow), as well as Moscow's central sports stadium Luzhniki. According to his impressions about Russia, as published in the New York Times, the Luzhniki stadium had impressed him enormously (when he was young he wanted to become a professional baseball player). He had not discovered any particular 'devil' underneath the stands of the stadium.

"His meeting with the Baptists in Moscow had opened his eyes to the fact that religious liberty was guaranteed in the atheist Soviet state".

Billy Graham further states in the American illustrated weekly "Newsweek" that "the godless young people on the Moscow boulevards behave better than youth in other countries".

"Nauka i Religia" continues: "After what Billy Graham saw in the USSR he should stop using the Communist state as a bogey for the faithful. He should give up the ideology of his crusades and join the attempts at a rapprochement enabling church dignitaries in other countries to fight for the crusade of all peoples, for disarmament and peace in the world. That would be more conducive to the spiritual peace of mankind than the kind of spiritual peace Billy Graham strives for. However, all this has not dampened Billy Graham's heated spirit. His crusade goes on.

"In Berlin Billy Graham carried on his mission to mankind in a huge tent 100 yards from the Brandenburg Gate. It is no coincidence that he enjoys the special favour of the Lord Mayor of West Berlin, Willy Brandt, against whose bellicose attitude the German Democratic Republic has, understandably, protested, branding Billy Graham as Brandt's machine gun.

"Like his compatriot, the late Frank Buchmann, leader of the Moral Rearmament Movement, Billy Graham is after a decoration from Chancellor Adenauer. This proves once again that, underneath the cloak of religion, Billy Graham is a warmonger conscientiously fulfilling the task set him by his earthly master, Mr. Dollar."

What Titow heard in space

Reports about the flight round the world by Soviet astronaut Germann S. Titow have been published in the world press, and the suddenly famous aviator has himself answered a host of questions at a large number of press conferences.

But his reply to a question he was asked right after landing has apparently only been printed in "Komsomol'skaia Pravda" (No. 187), the paper of the Communist Youth Association. The question was: "What radio broadcasts did you pick up during your space flight?"

Titow replied: "I was able to pick up many stations. I heard the announcer of Tass news agency in Moscow announce the take-off of the second Soviet spaceship, piloted by the Soviet citizen G.S. Titow, and I listened to many foreign stations. Suddenly there was some talk about saints. It was a pity I could not broadcast myself, because I would have told you what was going on in Heaven. I heard Moscow again and again, as well as numerous stations in countries all over the world. There was music, too, Johann Strauss waltzes, popular music and folksongs. Imagine how strange I felt when suddenly, through the noise of all those broadcasts in so many different languages, I heard the Soviet "Enthusiasm March". That was fabulous."

"The Red Star", the organ of the Soviet army, publishes a slightly different version (Krasnaia Svezda, No. 187, 1961).

The diary of a schoolgirl

V. Tendriakov is one of the most popular Soviet authors who use their pens in the service of anti-religious propaganda.

His short story "The miraculous icon" has not only gone through several editions, it has also been filmed (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches", No. 4, 1959).

Now two leading monthlies, "Novy Mir" and "Nauka i Religia" have simultaneously printed Tendriakov's new story: "An unusual event". The chief character in it is a schoolgirl, Tossia Lubkova, who keeps a diary. (Reproduced below in a summarised form.)

This wholly fictional story throws light on the religious and anti-religious feelings of the young people in the Soviet schools today.

The background of the story

Tossia Lubkova, "a quiet, shy girl in the top class" has lost her diary. In her despair she runs to the headmaster.

"Rascals, they are all rascals", she sobs, "not a good person in the whole school. I hate and despise them all, all". The headmaster advises her to tell him quietly what has happened.

Tossia: "What shall I tell you, you will hear it anyhow... from some informer".

The informer appears at that moment, it is Tossia's school-fellow Sasha Korotkov. He hands the headmaster an exercise book - Tassia's diary.

Headmaster: "So you have read somebody else's diary?"

Sasha, to justify himself, says that what is written in it is so monstrous that he has warned the school Komsomol group - the Communist youth organisation.

Headmaster: "I am not in the habit of reading other people's diaries".

Tossia: "Read it, please read it, it is all the same to me now and I am no longer ashamed of it".

The headmaster reads the diary of a shy Soviet mass-produced young creature... "Nonsense", he thinks to himself, "there are no conditioned souls, undistinguishable from each other. Every soul is different."

There are 900 boys and girls in his school. "How much needed to be done for each one - and life was so short..."

The headmaster questions Tossia's teacher. He visits her mother, although only class teachers usually visit parents. And he thinks about Sasha Korotkov (the informer), "who is one of his best pupils".

The School Komsomol will deal with the case of Tossia Lubkova. Anxiously the headmaster thinks: "Will not too much fuss be made in the process?"

Thanks to the headmaster's prudence, combined with his pedagogical patience, Tossia, who wanted never to enter the school again, finds herself once more on the school bench beside her friend Nina. The headmaster had returned her diary to her, with the advice to go on writing it.

"A small, but significant success for the Soviet scholastic system".

Tossia's diary

(Extracts from Tossia's diary, written in her best calligraphy)

One cannot live without faith. One must believe in goodness, in justice. But goodness and justice are something abstract. It is difficult to imagine them in a concrete way.

The figure 5 means nothing to me. But when someone says 5 copy books or 5 needles, I have a perfectly clear picture at once. Needles and copy books are for me expressions of the number 5.

"God is the expression of goodness and justice."

So if I believe in goodness I must also believe in God, and if there were no God then one would have to invent Him and keep Him in the depths of one's soul ...

I am sitting on the bench with Nina, and I have known her for five years. It seems that I know her well. But is she my friend? ... Probably she regards me as her friend ...

The day before yesterday, as we were going home together, Nina told me that she loves A. If I loved anybody I would certainly not say anything about it; not even to Nina.

If I could only love, but I do not love, do not love, do not love, although I want so much to love. I cannot imagine who would like me.

Recently I went dancing. A film mechanic asked me to dance with him, put his arm round me, but his hand trembled. I don't like dancing. Too many people.

Then I went home with Nina. I think I hate her because she is pretty. How horrid of me! I always think and act in such a way that I must be ashamed of myself afterwards. If Nina is not my friend, then I have no friend at all, nobody to whom I can talk about myself, if only to grumble. It is dreadful to live without love. But who cares? Who is interested in what I feel? But somebody must need me!

Why was I born? Was Tossia Lubkova born by chance and for no purpose on such and such a day, in order to die after 60 or 70 years, to disappear for ever...?

Aunt S. believes that man is not extinguished after death. The most important part of him, his soul, will live for ever. How easy life would be for me if I could believe that!

If I am eternal, immortal, then it does not matter whether I am ugly or not; that time goes by without love. For this temporal life has become unimportant. I have no faith, but without faith one cannot live.

Further on in Tossia's diary we read:

A piece of paper is pressed against a person's body and it is suggested to him that it is red-hot iron. A red spot appears on his skin as though the skin had been burnt. The spirit that has entered into that person has produced the burn scar, so spirit can become a power and leave traces! In that case spirit must exist. Then why do people not believe in God? Why?

Today I went again to see aunt S.. She is a simple woman and never ponders about things, as I do. She just believes and has no doubts. But I have doubts. So my faith must be weak.

Aunt S. filled a little bottle with holy water for me and said: "You will see that, however long it stands nothing will grow in it because it is holy water."

I hid the little bottle in the box-room, among some other empty bottles, on the window-sill. It is light there; in the dark nothing could grow in any case...

Aunt S. told me I should go to church one day. What for? If I have faith I do not need a church. Leo Tolstoi (the great Russian writer who was excommunicated by the Orthodox Church) did not like the church, where everything is a fraud.

They gather there and pray to bits of wood (holy pictures). How silly!

I have taken the bottle with the holy water from the window-sill. If I wait for something to grow in it, that means that I do not believe ... I do not need God so much as faith. But my faith is not right.

Yesterday was Christmas Day. Some girls from our class went to church out of curiosity. They were talking and laughing about it. If you do not believe, I thought, do not go to church. Fancy joking about faith! What is there that is higher than faith?

...There was another service in the church and I decided to go. Many people, forcing their way through the crowd and whispering to each other.

How I would have liked to say to them: "If you have faith, if you have come here to pray and purify your souls, why are you whispering to each other and pushing each other, as though you were in the market place?"

The service began. Many people knelt down. The choir began to sing. I was standing a long way from the altar and heard only the words: "Christ is risen from the dead. Death is swallowed up in victory!" What a message! Death is swallowed up in victory!

Around me all the people were crossing themselves. Nobody was pushing any more and even I felt a longing to pray together with them. I understood what the church is for. People should not believe in isolation. They all have the same God. Therefore they must come together from time to time in order to confess their faith. Let them pray to pieces of wood. The God who is represented on the piece of wood (in the icon) is not God, but a symbol of Him. Just as a letter is a symbol of the sound. I read the letters and produce the right sound. I see an icon and feel as I ought to feel before God.

No, praying to pieces of wood is not foolish! ...

Aunt S. gave me a little cross as a present. I always wear it round my neck. When I go to the bathroom, I take it off. I did that last time, but it fell out of my pocket. Nina saw it and asked me: "Where did you get that little cross?" I lied. I am ashamed of my faith. My heart is heavy. Oh, how I would like to live simply, like Aunt S. Not to think and not to doubt, to believe and not hide oneself...

(We plan to reproduce the end of this story in one of the forthcoming issues of "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches")

The voice of the atheist people

"Nauka i Religia" (circulation 100,000), in one of its recent issues, published an open letter to a first-year theological seminarist. The letter is signed by A. Shamaro.

"It is now over a month ago that you enrolled as a student in the religious seminary. By now you will have got used to the dreary, gloomy, monastic way of life in this ecclesiastical training institute. You start every day with prayer. Together with your fellow students you start and end every lesson, every meal, with prayer. You kiss the hand of your religious teacher. You solemnly walk to church for the service with the other seminarists. At night you slave away over clever tracts of 'learning' such as 'the history of the Old Testament' or 'the organisation of the church'.

"Tear yourself away from those books for a minute. Raise your eyes from those yellowed pages. It will be time enough to learn this 'wisdom' when you really decide to devote your life to the service of the church.

"From all corners of the Soviet Union 'Nauka i Religia' receives letters that are like clear drops of water reflecting the attitude of the Soviet people, your compatriots, towards religion. I would like to draw your attention to the following extracts from these letters:

"As is the case with every man who plans to enter a seminary, a priest will have taken you under his wing. Before recommending you, he has certainly had confidential talks with you, strengthening your wish to become a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church and painting your future in the most attractive colours. Nobody but you has heard these intimate conversations but it is easy to guess their substance ...

"They surely instilled into you the notion that religion is eternal, that the lifegiving light of the Christian faith will sooner or later lead to the recognition of all creation and godlessness will be wiped from the surface of this sinful world like a cloud of smoke or mist ...

"They will have told you that the Christian Church was and is the embodiment and fountain of endless love, of all that is good and righteous, of the highest justice. Your religious guide built up your courage, saying: 'Do not lose heart when you see how godlessness is spreading. It is only in the cities that atheists exist in large numbers, but in the country where, after completion of your studies, you will probably be called to serve the church, piety is as deep-rooted as ever ...

"Perhaps you will be sent to one of the parishes in Gomel-Oblast. Therefore it will not hurt you to take note of the following short letter from Koshegorie village:

"Today I went out with the work group of our Kolchose, as an (atheist) agitator. 37 simple Soviet farmers asked me to write to the editor of 'Nauka i Religia' and convey their best wishes for the editorial work on the magazine. They write: Our Kolchose is 85 - 90% atheist ...

"But perhaps real, devoted piety may be found elsewhere? Four short letters from different parts of the Soviet Union (including Stalingrad), all expressing the same feelings, are the answer to this question.

"Thus speak the simple people of the USSR. They all advise you: do not devote your young life to a cause that in our eyes belongs to a dead past.

"Every year our people becomes more atheist, and this truth is becoming evident even to the priests and elders of the various sects. It forces you as well to give constant thought to the question why people, including members of the older generation (who as children had a religious upbringing), turn away from God; why the bulk of our young people, with their inborn thirst for truth, firmly turn their backs on the 'lifegiving truth of Christianity'.

"Finally, there is an extract from a letter written by an old comrade, apparently addressed to himself: 'When a man has lived a righteous life he does not fear death, for he will never die in the hearts of men. But you risk eternal oblivion. You are still young. You can still change your mind, leave your miserable, useless God and mingle with the others in the real stream of life which is full of promise. If you return to us from your servitude to God you will have earned our esteem. But if you abandon yourself to God forever, you might as well never have been born.'"

"Nauka i Religia" ends its open letter to the seminarist asking him to remember that the atheist people wishes to ease his way for the decisive step of abandoning religion and coming back to them.

* * *

MISCELLANEOUS.

Polish government places new restrictions on religious instruction

The order given August 19 and disclosed in an issue of the official Communist organ "Trybuna Ludu" proscribes the amount and kind of religious instruction students can have outside of class-room time. The government had previously passed a bill banning all religious instruction in state schools.

The new order limits the amount of instruction to two hours a week, makes catechism teachers employees of the state and places classes and teachers under government supervision. Key points include:

Teaching permits will be denied to "those priests who have abused the generally accepted principles of behaviour toward young people" such as "using religious lessons for reactionary political purposes".

Members of religious orders are barred from teaching catechism.

Catechism classes must be registered with local school boards which will "exercise supervision over them".

The places of teaching "must be fitted out with appropriate requirements of hygiene and must not be overcrowded".

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